

THE *Final Straw*

A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW



The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world. Since 2010, we've been broadcasting from occupied Tsalagi land in Southern Appalachia (Asheville, NC).

We also frequently feature commentary (serious and humorous) by anarchist prisoner, Sean Swain.

You can send us letters at:

The Final Straw Radio
PO Box 6004
Asheville, NC 28816
USA

Email us at:

thefinalstrawradio@riseup.net
or **thefinalstrawradio@protonmail.com**

To hear our past shows for free, visit:
<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org>

Fat Liberation For Revolutionary Leftists

The Final Straw Radio
October 10, 2021



Black and brown activists. You can donate to Fat Rose. One of my close friends has a Instagram and Twitter that is like I think it's both @AbolishTheUSA on both Instagram and Twitter and they were they were the person who suggested I write the syllabus and on their platform that was where the syllabus was originally circulated from. So if anyone I guess wants to email me or get in touch with me specifically, maybe you could contact now at @AbolishTheUSA and say that you have a message for me.

TFSR: Autumn, those were all the questions that I had. Thank you so much for your time and having this conversation with me. I really appreciate your energy and the time that you spent in hashing all this stuff out. Is there anything that we missed in this interview that you want to give voice to or something that you'd like to say in closing?

Autumn: I think we got everything but I just want to thank you so much, again, for having me. And this has been just such a incredible experience. And I'm always super grateful to the Final Straw Radio and just you all are doing such amazing work and I'm really honored to be part of it.

TFSR: Thank you so much. The feeling is super mutual. I'm really happy to have gotten to meet you a little bit and it was really lovely to get to share some digital space with you for a little while and talk about this thing that I really hope that people will take back into their spaces and like do some thinking and do some reading and stuff if they need to do that. So thank you so much.

Autumn: Yah! Oh my gosh. Thank you.

This week I am very excited to present an interview with Autumn (she/her/hers), who is an anarchist and scholar-activist, on Fat Liberation in all its many nuances, the pervasive, classist, racist, and colonial nature of fatphobia both in mainstream society and in far left spaces and thought, and the roots of Fat Liberation as a structure which originates and lives with Black, Indigenous, and brown, trans and disabled people. We also speak about Autumn's syllabus entitled *Fat Liberation Syllabus for Revolutionary Leftists: Confronting Fatphobia on the Left AND Liberalism within the Fat Liberation Movement*. In this document, she compiles writings on the many aspects of fatphobia and gives her own analysis in bulleted form. This document is available for public use, and you can find it at <https://tinyurl.com/FatLiberation!>

To get in touch with Autumn, you can @abolishtheusa on Instagram.

Search for this interview title at <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/> to find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

Autumn: Thank you so much for having me. So, Hello! My name is Autumn I use she / her pronouns. I'm really honored to be here and appreciate you taking the time to have me on air. Some background about myself, I am an anarchist scholar-activist who focuses on abolishing racial capitalism, through a Fat Liberation and Disability Justice lens. I am a white, Jewish, anti-Zionist, queer person. I'm a longtime organizer around mutual aid, present and border abolition and anti-fascism Palestine solidarity as well as some direct action. So, some of my work has focused on bringing a fat liberation lens to revolutionary anti-State left movements and looking at how we can create dialogue and, more importantly, coalition between our movements.

TFSR-William: That's awesome. Do you have any more words to say about the like, scholar activist aspect to your work?

Autumn: Totally. So I think that scholar activism is basically a way of how can we reclaim or liberate intellectual work that is kind of sometimes held captive or gate-kept by like academic institutions and by this very capitalist idea of production and producing knowledge within academia. So scholar-activism, one way it works is through taking resources from academia and giving them back to on the ground organizers. Or sometimes it works. And it's a form of, you know, creating knowledge by and for our movement, and creating kind of collective knowledge as opposed to this sort of like, again, capitalist colonial model of like the brilliant academic or the brilliant individual.

TFSR: I love that. Thank you so much for going into that. So we're here to talk about fat liberation. And like I said, before we started rolling the tape. This is a topic that I have wanted to cover on the final straw for some time now. So thank you, thank you. Thank you so much for being willing to speak on this. How did you come to be working toward fat liberation?

Autumn: Yeah, that's a good question. So firstly, my life as a fat person, also as a disabled person, as a queer person, as a working class person is deeply effected by anti-Blackness. So if I want my life and the lives of folks in my community and my loved ones to improve, I really have no choice but to invest in Fat Liberation on as a revolutionary struggle. On a more macro level, I have a strong background in community organizing, as well

ally really well organized and has a lot of reading resources if if reading is something that feels good to folks. How can people see this document? is it available for public use?

Autumn: Yes, thank you for asking it is available for public use. It's available at <https://tinyurl.com/FatLiberation> if there are show notes you can put the link to that in the in the show notes but um that's it available tiny URL please share it share it widely amplify it.

TFSR: There's so much there. I really got a lot out of looking at this document and just going on these tangents and going down rabbit holes, and it's a really, really, really well, well done document. Thank you so much for doing it.

Autumn: Well, thank you so much. And yeah, thank you so much for engaging with it. I also I do recognize that reading a long document is accessible for for everyone. If there are people who feel better listening to podcasts, there's a really great one that I mentioned before whole Food Psych. There's also following people on Instagram, like following @TheFatSexTherapist.

Oh my gosh, there's another podcast that the name of it is escaping me. But her name is Aubrey Gordon, her Instagram is @YourFatFriend, I think she has a link to the podcasts, but it talks especially about fatphobia and wellness culture and unpacking what we've been taught to think about wellness culture. So I just want to say that there are options that don't necessarily like involve reading and other free resources. Jervae has also created a bunch of YouTube and TickTock videos and they're a really incredible fat Black philosopher and artist, so they have a lot of also great resources that aren't necessarily long documents.

TFSR: That's awesome. And I'll link those all of those that you mentioned in the show notes. How can people support you and your work and you've shouted out a lot of other folks how people can support them but how can people support you if you would like that?

Autumn: Yeah, thanks for asking. Um, I think so. I'm not on social media personally but I think just keep sharing the fat liberation syllabus, keep circulating it especially donate and amplify the works of, especially, fat

Autumn: Thank you for showing off the website. Yeah. It's really wonderful organization.

TFSR: Totally. You touched on this, like in previous answers, but I'm curious specifically, if you have more words on how might you encourage thin white people to show up for their fat comrades, friends and family?

Autumn: So I think you know, if you can't just be fat people showing up for fat liberation. You know, as previously mentioned, I think it's really important think about how you can name and show up for fat liberation struggles. Amplify the work of Fat Rose, again, if you have financial resources. Support or amplify the work of fat Black and brown activists, you know, join their Patreons, support them financially. Also, if you're a thin white person who has a lot of social capital and visibility. Think about how you can reject the pedestal that you're placed on and how you can pass this info onto others, especially other organizers. On a personal level, kind of interrogate who your friends or even lovers with, how you treat people in your lives, are your spaces accessible for fat people. You know, I think also it's important to kind of unpacked desirability politics and especially unpack the idea that fatness is inherently unattractive. And I really just want to say that that's not just about dating preferences, nobody is forcing you to date or sleep with fat people. But Caleb Luna, again, really brilliant proud scholar activist, recently wrote on their Instagram about how desirability politics affects them, way beyond just eating. It's about how they're able to access resources, like health care, and professional opportunities.

Beyond that, I think in our radical and revolutionary movements, it's really important to, again, make sure that we're also talking about fat liberation and we're naming and organizing around the intersections of fatphobia and racial capitalism or fat phobia and colonialism. So it's about both like listening you know, doing some self reflection and introspection, as well as, materially showing up.

TFSR: Yeah, and if people are looking to start a reading or listening group, your syllabus really has just so much information in it. It's broken down into categories, like there's a category on anti fatness and anti blackness there's a category on sis hetero patriarchy it's really re-

as some anti-capitalist organizing. And, you know, when I first started organizing, I began to notice that when I would enter radical spaces or organizing spaces, there would be zero analysis around factors other than shallow and incorrect ideas, that top audience were simply the tragic result of State and Capitalist violence, like food deserts, and that really like bewildered and upset me because so many of the struggles that I faced in my life were connected to anti fatness. Specifically, you know, getting denied health care that I needed, not being seen as a survivor of sexual violence. And, you know, seeing fat liberation being used as a tool of white supremacy, particularly anti-blackness. One of the breaking points for both my class consciousness and my fat liberation politics was when I was at one of my former workplaces and a co worker was sexually harassing me and I reported it to my manager. And my manager basically looked at me up and down and laughed and told me that I wasn't "pretty enough to be harassed." And so then slowly, you know, kind of, I developed a concept like a consciousness around about activism, and I was introduced to the works of activists and scholars like Jervae, Hunter A. Shackelford, Dr. Sabrina Strings, Marquisele Mercedes, Caleb Luna, Da'Shaun L. Harrison, and others. And that really inspired me to understand liberation is not only connected to other revolutionary organizing struggles that I was a part of, but like integral to them. So we cannot have other revolutionary struggles for collective liberation without fat liberation.

TFSR: Definitely. Yeah. And we're gonna get into some more of what you just mentioned, I think, later in the interview. So, you and I believe another person have compiled a syllabus, entitled "fat liberation syllabus for revolutionary leftists." And it has as a stated objective to confront fatphobia within radical spaces and also the entrenched liberalism within the more mainstream fat liberation movement. To just begin though, for any listeners who haven't heard this term, will you just begin by saying what is meant by "fat liberation" and where it came from?

Autumn: Yeah, absolutely. That's a great question. So fat liberation is a radical, anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-State movement that was started by fat, Black and brown, disabled, queer and trans people. It locates fatphobia / sizesism as a tool of capitalism, the state, white supremacy, colonialism, and specifically a tool of anti-Black, State violence. Bodies, especially body is commonly thought of as "deviant" or "unhealthy", are

often sites for state and capitalist violence of how we should offer as a lens to revolutionary transform how we think about bodies, how we think about medicine, how we think about healing. Which is really crucial for us as revolutionary leftists and how we organize to take care of one another outside of the state and outside of capitalism, as well as our work to abolish capitalism and all, you know, all settler colonial states. I think it's really important to think about that liberation is not just another box to check off for the sake of like, liberal "diversity" or "inclusion" quotas. But instead, it's a necessary framework that we should always be operating within our activist spaces.

TFSR: Totally. So you mentioned fat phobia's roots in colonialism and anti-Blackness, and anti-Black racism and not to put you in a corner or make you talk about stuff from a subjectivity that isn't yours, but would you just talk a little bit about that, from your perspective, and what you've learned so far?

Autumn: Yeah, absolutely. So I first want to say that some of the really amazing scholar-activists who have done that work, I just want to shout them out and give credit where credit is due. And you know, if any listeners have financial resources, and can support these people, pay these people's Patreon or donate to them, I really strongly encourage that. So there are folks like the Da'Shaun L. Harrison, who just recently published a book called I think it was just published in August. It's called "Belly of the Beast: anti-fatness as anti-Blackness." Dr. Sabrina Strings, who wrote a book about I think two years ago now called "Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia." Hunter Shackleford, who is a really amazing, fat, Black, academic, educator, artist, and activist. And basically, they've explained that the origins of fatphobia are very intertwined with the rise of colonialism and racial capitalism. And unlike other systems of oppression, we only have to go back about 300 or 400 years to kind of find the origins of fatphobia. And so if we think back to the original colonization of Turtle Island, or the so called so-called North America and the inception of the violence settler colonial nation on whose land we said, the so-called US. That original colonization was from Puritan European colonizers and one of the kind of ideas that they brought with them was the Protestant work ethic, which basically says that individuals who are "godly", if they are disciplined if they're hardworking, if they're able to restrict themselves, whereas it is, quote, unquote, sinful to be lazy, you're

identifying that fat and disabled people have a specific seek in abolition because, again, our experiences are in no way the same of those incarcerated in presents or in ice detention. We do know what it's like to be treated as disposable. And so my understanding is that fat rose really recognizes the radical potential of fat people to organize, as well as aiming to create spaces where fat people can organize without without experiencing fat phobia from other organizers. It's not really my story to tell, but I know that there are folks in Fat Rose who have specifically sought out fat specific organizing spaces because of some really horrendous experiences with fat phobia and other lefty or progressive spaces. Fat rooms organized a really beautiful action in San Francisco at the ICE headquarters, where they demanded the abolition of ICE and the closure of the concentration camps. Caleb Luna, who I mentioned before, he was a scholar activist around for liberation read a really beautiful speech there. And this was the first time that I'd really seen anything to that magnitude that was explicitly organized from a Disability Justice and fat liberation focal point.

Additionally, during the ongoing COVID pandemic Fat Rose has organized the no body is disposable coalition, which demands an end to eugenicist COVID triage policies in ICU where fat people, disabled people, elderly people, people who are HIV positive, and people who are living with other illnesses are denied life saving COVID treatment or taking off ventilator treatment. And there's literally procedures for hospitals to take people off ventilator treatment, if the you know, fall into one of these categories. Fat Rose has been doing a lot of really cool work to organize against that. Since then, Fat Rose has put on a lot of really rad events. I know they recently did a series called busting out about fat liberation and prison abolition and transformative justice. I believe their Instagram is @FatLibInc, and their Facebook it should be fat rose. So I encourage you know also listeners to check them out on social media and follow them on social media.

TFSR: Totally, they have a really beautiful website, that's just FatRose. Org where you can see a lot of you can see how to get involved. You can see essays that they have written you can see more about busting out. I'm looking at it right now. They have a cookbook. They have all this beautiful, beautiful material on their website. So I encourage people if they're curious to go check, check it out.

important to share and amplify the work of revolutionary fat liberation activists. So the names that I mentioned before are Da'Shaun L. Harrison, Marquisele Mercedes, Hunter Shackelford, Dr. Sabrina Springs, Jervae. Other folks who are doing really incredible work are Caleb Luna. I think that both her instagram and twitter is chair breaker. And then Sonalee Rashatwar who's **@TheFatSexTherapist** on Instagram, who have some really incredible content. So I just encourage everybody to just go follow these people. Again, if you have financial resources, consider joining their Patreon, consider, you know, donating to them financially. You know, and I think beyond that, like it's really important to reach out in fight for activists to be part of your movement and be in coalition with you. I get excited when I hear other leftists just leaving fatphobia but I think I shouldn't have to feel that way. Because fat liberation should be the norm.

You know, I think also again, kind of like rejecting the moralization of food and just understanding how oftentimes our hatred of fats of fast food is very in meshed with fatphobia and anti-Blackness like classism and capitalism. It just because there are a lot of like really pervasive, fat phobic, racist and classist cultural stereotypes around who eats or is presumed to eat fast food or processed food and no matter how much we try to masquerade our hatred of fast food or processed food as anti capitalist or as condemning the corporations that produce the food like that's... No matter how much we try to mask read up, it's still rooted in this fat phobic idea of that subject and food is better than other foods, in a post revolutionary world people will still have the options to eat hamburgers and fried foods if they want to and that's okay. You know, I think also just, trying to hide hatred and disgust for fast food behind anger at the corporations and the exploitation of workers that doesn't actually help fast food workers unionize it, or build power and organize. I'm a former fast food worker, and I can really attest to how that kind of attitude of being disgusted by so fast food workers.

TFSR: And I'm also a former fast food worker and definitely share that you mentioned, fat activists and fat activism, would you speak about the Fat Rose collective and how it came to be formed?

Autumn: Yes, totally. So I believe Fat Rose was formed in the summer of 2019 by fat and disabled activists who organized around the abolish ice movement to close the concentration camps. And they were specifically

overindulgent. So this was a way of basically looking at the body and understanding that "Okay, so thin bodies, especially thin white bodies are hardworking and are disciplined and they're able to restrict themselves. Whereas fat bodies are lazy, they're overindulgent. Those are sinful, quote unquote, bodies."

And so kind of the origin of anti-fatness in anti-Blackness is, we see it very much arising in the era of like 19th century eugenics. And this idea that white European scientists were trying to basically look at, look at like, physical characteristics and use that as a justification for the superiority of European white people, especially like Western European white people. So in that the used the idea that "okay, Black people tend to be larger than white people. So that means inherently that Black people are more 'primitive,' and they're not able to control themselves as more they need to be controlled and restrained. Whereas like white people are able to have discipline and they're more intelligent and their political more advanced." And then, in the era of 19th century eugenics, that was when body mass index or BMI was like developed as a concept, and it was very much used to label white bodies, especially white men's bodies as, normative or healthy and label Black people's bodies as obese and unhealthy.

This continues to this day, where we see the entanglements of fatphobia and anti black violence continuing medical establishments, again, we're fat Black patients are less likely to receive care that they need. I mean, fat bodies in general are less likely to receive the care that they need, they're often just told to just lose weight. The state, when they surveil and target Black, brown and indigenous communities for having "high rates of obesity" and then using that as a justification to have Child Protective Services come in and remove fat children. There's a lot of work done by Dr. Dorothy Roberts on the child welfare system not actually being about child welfare just being another way for the state to like control and monitor Black families or indigenous families or brown families. And disproportionately, Black and indigenous children are removed from their homes for non-justifiable reasons and because there's this... It's hard to find the racial statistics of children who are removed from their homes, but because oftentimes "obesity" is used as a justification for that, I think it's pretty like easy to infer that that's oftentimes a justification for removing Black and indigenous children from their homes.

You know, in terms of state violence, fat Black people like Kayla Moore and Eric Garner, and recently Ma'Khia Bryant were murdered by the police and then the police in the general public, blamed their murders on their fatness. Da'Shaun L. Harrison, who I mentioned before, discusses this justification for the state murders of black people in their book "Belly of the Beast: The Politics of Anti-Fatness as Anti-Blackness." Does that kind of answer the question?

TFSR: Oh, yeah, totally. And it's such a like, vast top pet topic that, you know, I think that you like, shout it out some really amazing resources. Sabrina strings is the one who I'm most familiar with. And her book "Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia," which is a fantastic breakdown by era: she looks at art history, she looks at the developing trade routes built on the back of enslaved people. She does all of this stuff. And it's a really amazing, amazing resource.

Autumn: Absolutely. I really recommend that folks read that book and look into it.

TFSR: I also just want to like, name the... You know, you mentioned like treatment by your former manager, when you like brought concerns about your co-worker, and then saying that vile shit to you. That is like, completely unacceptable. And I'm so sorry that happened.

Autumn: Thank you. Yeah, no, thank you for sharing that. Yeah. And I think that that kind of highlights... I talked about it a little bit in the fat liberation syllabus, but there's a really kind of disturbing intersection between fatphobia and rape culture that I don't see getting talked about enough. And I'm hoping that those conversations can get started more.

TFSR: Absolutely. Hopefully this will like help start that conversation a bit. So, we talked about a little bit: in order to talk about how fat phobia and fatmisia, which is... Would you give a definition of fatmisia really quick?

Autumn: This is one of the first times that I've heard it, but I would say that it's more kind of ideological understanding of this idea that fatness is something to be avoided or pathologized.

capitalism and colonialism. But I just have a lot of issues when people try to integrate speciesism into an intersectionality framework and claim that veganism is somehow anti-oppressive.

TFSR: Yeah, I mean, Capitalist Veganism is just as oppressive to humans and to the earth as other things. I don't know, there was, you know, all of this analysis about factory farming, which factory farming is traumatic, right? A lot of people are super traumatized by it. On the other hand, I'm not gonna tell somebody that they can't eat some things they need to eat.

Autumn: Absolutely. And again, factory farming is horrific, it should be abolished with a question "Is the issue meat or animal product consumption, or is it capitalism and colonialism?"

TFSR: Totally. Yeah. And I think that the problematic common denominator is definitely capitalism and colonialism. I'm wondering your thoughts on how we as a scene, together could bring fat liberation into radical and anarchist spaces and thought, love to hear your thoughts on that.

Autumn: Yeah, I really appreciate that question. I think it kind of starts with naming and identifying fat liberation as a revolutionary struggle and actually talking about it and engaging with it. You know, thin people especially you to engage with this. I made a graphic that will soon be a zine, which I'm super excited for it to be a zine. But it should be on my friend's Instagram, and I can send a link to that. It's about making in-person militant actions with a diversity of tactics accessible for fat and disabled comrades. And I think sometimes it's just a matter of whether it's a direct action or a meeting, or community space, really asking the question of "Can we all go and everybody fit in this image space, literally?" I have been in a lot of spaces where I'm very uncomfortable because the chairs are not made for fat people or, you know, I feel like I'm the only fat person there, or the door is not wide enough. And I think that's also really kind of hand in hand with Disability Justice and thinking about how accessibility and Disability Justice is a framework that we constantly need to be operating within. I think also, you know, it's important to call out or confront fatphobia when we see it, whether that's in the broader world, or whether that's with our revolutionary or organizing circles. I think it's really

Nazis that makes me pretty angry because that's just literally eugenics and diet culture disguised as a poor interpretation of anti fascism. You can kill Nazis on a moped! You know? There have been a lot of really kick ass fat and disabled anti fascists who are literally doing that work. I guess on the maybe on the more anarchist side I guess I see about phobia kind of coming up sometimes in lifestyle politics and this idea about in order to be a devoted anarchists, we need to be vegan, and we need to be dumpster diving and living in a squat. And I think we need to really kind of abandon those lifestyle politics. Um, you know, there's nothing wrong with being vegan or dumpster diving, but it doesn't make someone more of a comrade if they're not if they don't want to do that. And just like our politics are not defined by the food we eat or by, you know, why do we choose to live in a decaying squat?

TFSR: Yeah, thank you so much for talking about fast food and exercise. I definitely see that meme and anti fascist spaces that really fetishize this exercise the like "a fascist worked out today, did you?" or something like that. And the topic of veganism is also really interesting. There's definitely a lot to be said about it. I think I myself have definitely noticed not all leftist vegans that I've come across have exhibited this tendency but sometimes I see people doing veganism in order to... And I don't want to use judgy language and I might cut this out so like between you and me... To maybe mask some very troubled relationship with food itself.

And using politics to bury that or whatever. I mean, using politics to also bury classism and fat phobic tendencies as well. Be vegan, that's fine, but do so for reasons that aren't contributing to the oppression of people around you.

Autumn: Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you for saying that I agree with that 100% and I guess I just have trouble. I have no problem with people being vegan, if you want to be vegan, go for it. And that's completely your prerogative. But I think just have trouble with this any kind of ideology that attaches moral values, the foods that we eat, and I think that there are and this is maybe it's a longer conversation... But I think that there are, important things to be said about a decolonial or in or an indigenous worldview developing a more symbiotic relationship with animals and nature as opposed to this late very exploitative worldview coming from

TFSR: And it's like distinct from fatphobia in that like phobia is like a fear.

Autumn: Yeah, I'm not exactly sure how it's... I think fat phobia is similar. I think sometimes fat phobia is used more in terms of thinking about how we internalize like anti fatness, and how that's enacted in interpersonal interactions, or in communal interactions, whereas fatmisia is more like on a broader kind of ideological lens?

TFSR: That's really helpful. Thank you. So, in order to talk about both of these things, and how they emerge in radical spaces, firstly, we could probably talk a lot about how it emerges in broader society. Since fat-phobia, infects so much of the structures we are forced to contend with, like you mentioned, the medical industrial complex and the state for starters.. Not to like, start too big. This is a topic whose completeness may like be beyond the scope of a single podcast episode, but nevertheless, could you speak on this in a general sense, and the roots of fat phobia and fatmisia specifically, I know you touched on this a little bit before but do you have anything else you want to say about it?

Autumn: No, absolutely. So, and like any other system of oppression, there's nothing natural about fatphobia or hating larger bodies. As humans, there's nothing that's like natural about us that says, oh, thinness is better. That's completely socially constructed. Just you know, and this is a common disclaimer that I have to give or that a lot of like fat activists have to give. Anytime that we talk about fatphobia, one of the most common forms of backlash that I see is the claim that like, "Oh, it's unhealthy to be fat, and there's an obesity epidemic. And don't you think that we should focus on health?" So, you know, I really wish that I didn't have to give this kind of disclaimer, but you know, I won't in this interview won't be addressing the question of is it healthy to be fat, because health is multi dimensional, it's not a measure of our worth, and nobody is obligated to be healthy. There are many people of all sizes, who have disabilities and chronic illnesses, who will never be "healthy" by normative standards.

That said, it's actually not unhealthy to be fat. And there's a lot of scientific research and evidence that supports that conclusion. There's a really valuable, evidence-based medical paradigm called Health at Every Size, which is readily available online, there's a Health at Every science website, there's

a book by Lindo Bacon, called “Health at Every Size,” which, you know, people are interested in that you can go look at that.

Historically, you know, and before 300 to 400 years ago, fat bodies were actually kind of like revered and celebrated. I kind of mentioned earlier that the rise of fat phobia and the rise of the idea of the thin ideal is very rooted in the Protestant work ethic as well as this kind of neoliberal, bootstraps idea that weight loss is simply the result of hard work and discipline rather than the result of. Most people who lose a significant amount of weight, gain it back within five years, and we have a lot less control over our weight over our bodies, than we’d like to believe. And, you know, importantly, our ideas about health and medicine are not objective or neutral. Black feminists, especially, have done a really good job at explaining how what’s often cast as supposed “objective medical facts” as actually completely socially constructed. There’s no evidence to support that. And again, as I mentioned before, in the age of 19th century eugenics, that was really the era that emerged that fatness was inherently unhealthy, and that people should be instructed to lose weight. You know, before that we don’t really see a lot of emphasis on weight loss is the key to health. People were really concerned about, like dying of dysentery. So, you know, if you were fat, you were considered like robust and healthy, because we’re less likely to die of all the infectious diseases. And so, as I mentioned, before, fitness became a marker of weight, especially Western European bodies being disciplined “intelligent, well controlled bodies” and Black bodies became seen as uncontrollable, and inferior political primitive. And, again, the fact that white scientists noticed that Black people were larger than white people that was used as a justification for the supposed inferiority of Black people.

And then in terms of the connection between fatphobia and capitalism... So there’s an at-least \$2 billion weight loss industry. And as the center of the weight loss industry is this kind of myth of critical personal responsibility that you can have what is called the ultimate fantasy of corporeal malleability that is just like “if you just work hard enough, and if you’re just disciplined enough, and if you just, you know restrict... you just eat the right things, if you just eat like healthy organic food, and you just force yourself to eat that, that thinness can be achieved through that.” So and, importantly, there’s this kind of these two models of fatphobia that tend to emerge. This one of conservative contempt and this one of liberal pity

fall into a fat phobic, white-middle-class-centric standard of healthy.” This great article by Marquisele Mercedes also talks about how true food justice is not about what one person or organization believes that marginalized communities should be eating, it’s about supporting the community’s autonomy and control over their food. It’s about supporting people to be less stressed, well fed and nourished, however that may it look like.

On a side note, I found it telling how there is so much focus on trying to get poor working class people to eat more vegetables or eat less processed food. And you know, this idea that that’s going to be some kind of remedy for racial capitalism and state violence. Of course there’s nothing wrong with building a community garden but I encourage us to think critically about why we as a culture are so obsessed with food and exercise as the ultimate you know remedy when we know that there are more important issues that we need to address.

I think there’s something to be said about the way that and this is gonna be an unpopular opinion maybe, with some people but... This kind of hatred and disgust of fast food and the way that I see sometimes in leftist spaces fast food being singled out as this really abomination disgusting abomination that nobody should be eating, but I think it’s important to think about “why do we think that and why are we singling out McDonald’s” when you know Whole Foods or the United Fruit Company or Sabra hummus are like active participants or causers of gentrification? Or the United Fruit Company literally supported the US military installing right wing military coups and Central America and the Caribbean or, you know, Sabra hummus is profiting off of the occupation of Palestine.

Why do we single out fast food or food corporations that we see as unhealthy when there’s some very pervasive, racist, fat phobic and classist stereotypes about who is presumed to eat fast food. Let’s really think about when we think about people who eat fast food, who do we who are we thinking of? And why are we singling out fast food and that’s not necessarily accurate but it’s a very it’s a very unfortunately pervasive cultural trope about who is presumed to eat fast food.

I guess other areas of fatphobia that I see in leftist spaces in anarchist spaces... I feel like I hear it more from Marxist-Leninists with this argument that we need to get the proletariat fit and healthy so they can fight

think that that leads the way for some really exciting potential coalition between fat activists and, you know, those of us fighting for the Liberation of Palestine.

TFSR: Absolutely, I had no idea that the State of Israel was doing that bullshit. That is really Stark and very, very troubling. I'm wondering, too, so just to narrow the focus perhaps onto like radical and anarchist spaces. There's many, many, many ways that fatphobia and fatmisia, like spin out in anarchist spaces and rad spaces. But one of those that you mentioned in your syllabus, is that people sometimes exhibit the unfortunate tendency to equate fatness with capitalism. Can you expand on how you see this happening?

Autumn: 100% Yeah, so I never want to see another anarchist, or another leftist graphic that uses fat bodies as a metaphor for capitalism, or bosses or the police. So I feel like I've seen a lot of graphics that show like workers tearing down the big fat boss. And I just want to facepalm whenever I see that, because that's a great way to alienate fat comrades. That imagery is especially ironic because, like other marginalized groups, statistically fat people are more likely to be paid less, and they're more and more likely to live in poverty. You know, and I think, obviously, gender and race play into that, but it's unlikely that the CEO of a big company would be a fat person, even if it is like a white cis-het man. And again, I see this a lot of in leftist spaces, a lot of repeating diet, culture logic around fat being unhealthy and fat being something that needs to be eliminated. Particularly I see it come up in conversations around food deserts. And playing into the liberal pity idea that, fat bodies are this tragic result of food deserts, or food apartheid.

Marquisele Mercedes, who's a really wonderful critical Public Health Studies, scholar and activist and also a fat studies scholar, has a really wonderful article called How to recenter equity in decent or fitness in the fight for food justice. And she talks about understanding food apartheid, or differential access to food across racial and capital, and class lines as an intentional form of racial capitalist violence. But then the problem with a lot of liberal so-called food justice movements is that they use fatphobia and diet culture to distract from the real problem of racial capitalism with the focus being on again "obesity prevention" and trying to paternalistically "fix the eating habits of poor Black and brown people that don't

or liberal fatphobia. So for example, conservatives believe that our people are simply lazy, that, you know, we just need to go to the gym or put down the cheeseburger. And then I mean, I wouldn't even call the flip side cuz it's not the polar opposite of this. But liberal fatphobia in this kind of liberal pity model looks down about people as objects of pity and views us as abject and diseased. And as the result of, you know, structural problems like GMOs and food deserts. And oftentimes, this is very racialized, like this is oftentimes, white liberals looking down at fat Black and brown people and just thinking "Oh, they just need to be taught to like, eat better, basically," through a very kind of like paternalistic forms of intervention. And I just really want to touch on that, you know, conservative contempt and liberal pity, are not polar opposites, right? They're kind of different sides of the same coin. Like they both result from this idea that fatness is pathological and that it needs to be eliminated.

TFSR: That's a really amazing breakdown. They like as a sort of like the double prong not even like dualistic because like you said, it's not it's not polar opposite like the conservative and liberal like lenses through which this is, you know, largely viewed in society is like really interesting to think about. And also the neoliberalism inherent in the weight loss industry to is I think we're totally remarkable, like the whole like individual focus on like your individual effort or whatever it's, it's like tantamount to being "oh, all y'all who are like buying a new toothbrush every year, you're, you're causing climate change," or whatever. You know, it's totally ridiculous. But, at the same time, it just rules so much of how this is viewed.

Autumn: Absolutely. And I would say that that really shows how we think about health, and just how we think about wellness. Because I think that there's this really great podcast that I maybe will mentioned in some of the..., I don't know if maybe we don't mention that later, but it's called, it's called Food Psych. And the person who like is the host, her name is Christy Harrison, she's an anti-diet dietitian. And she talks a lot about the social determinants of health and how only about 30% of health outcomes are determined by individual health behaviors, including things like smoking, or having unprotected sex. Which are, you know, but no judgement, of course, it just causally linked to health risks. But I think that just goes to show that the real threats to our health are not necessarily like what we eat, or how much we exercise, but stress caused by racial capitalism,

caused by poverty, caused by state violence. And I sort of wonder when we're so focused on "how can I personally restrict my consumption? So I don't cause global warming?" or "How can I eat as healthy as possible so I will have good health outcomes?" Rather than, like, "how has racial capitalism and how is the state making us sick, and basically having a really detrimental effect on our bodies and minds." And it's kind of like a distraction from the important questions.

TFSR: Absolutely. And just to support that, briefly, I have a friend who's an ER nurse who says that about 95% of everything he sees is a direct result of racialized capitalism.

Autumn: Absolutely, just like, stress, especially stress that's directly caused by racial capitalism is probably one of the worst things for our bodies and our minds.

TFSR: To touch also briefly on the liberalism in the fat liberation movement aspect of your work, specifically, you write and compile resources about the interaction of the "body positivity," and "diversity" aspects to capitalism and toxic diet and culture. Would you expand on this and say a few words about how this also influences more left radical spaces?

Autumn: No, for sure. So the term "body positivity," to me, it's pretty meaningless and I feel like it's basically become this kind of individualistic self help movement, which locates the solution to fatphobia in individuals loving their bodies, and, you know, separate from anything that's political. There's nothing wrong with with self love, I think it can be really helpful. But as activists, we need to be invested in a political revolutionary movement, rather than focusing on self help. And so I think that there's just a lot of ways that, especially now, you will see capitalism really kind of co-opting body positivity. Like if you go on Instagram, like you'll see so many companies like trying to sell you something by proclaiming how "inclusive" or "diverse" they are. I think what is especially harmful about that is when companies like do try and showcase fat people, or when celebrities try and showcase fat people in their music videos. It's like fat people are like treated as props to show how diverse and inclusive a celebrity or a corporation is. For example, I think there's like two years ago now, Miley Cyrus had a video, I think it's called "Mother's Daughter"

and in the video... It's supposed to be representation of.. they show a fat person and they show someone who uses a wheelchair and they show someone breastfeeding. But then, you know, thin, white Miley Cyrus, able bodied Miley Cyrus is still the center of the music video. And so in that instance, it's you know, that's just an example I would say of fat people or disabled people becoming these props to just like prove, how invested Miley Cyrus's and like diversity and inclusivity.

And so my theory is that there hasn't really been a lot of conversation, at least in my experience, it's changing some which is great, between fat activists and revolutionary and anti-state leftists. I think a lot of that is definitely due to fatphobia on the left. But more broadly, I think fat liberation tends to get siphoned off into these kinds of specific fields such as, at best being about like public health and at worst being on this kind of individualistic like self help movement that's led by Instagram influencers with clothing companies. And so that doesn't really allow space for us to draw connections and coalition's between fat liberation and anti-state, anarchists or leftist movements such as, you know, abolishing racial capitalism, and abolishing prisons and borders, and why fat liberation as a part of that. And if there was that coalition, if those conversations were happening, we wouldn't have people who have been really active in the body positive or the health of every size movement, being for example, Zionists, or endorsing Elizabeth Warren.

One glaring example without naming names is there's this person who has been a central figure in some "body positive" or "fat spaces," is a fat person and has written some like influential books about health and advertising. And that person is a Zionist, and has literally publicly claimed that fat activists need to support the State of Israel. And so a radical intervention into that line of thought would be to understand how colonial states like the so-called US and Israel often use the logic of diet culture and fatphobia to uphold genocidal violence and occupation. So, for example, Israel literally restricts the amount of calories and food that goes into Palestine. I want to be really clear here that I'm in no way equating being a fat person or being someone targeted by diet culture in the US with being a Palestinian living under Israeli apartheid or Israeli occupation. But I think understanding how diet culture and fatphobia is used as a tool of colonialism and occupation... I think that's really important for thinking about fat liberation as an internationalist, an anti-colonial project and I